



channel catfish

Ictalurus punctatus

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Cypriniformes
Family:	Ictaluridae

Features

The average channel catfish is one to two pounds and 12 to 32 inches long. The state record fish weighed 36 1/2 pounds and was 40 1/2 inches long. The tail is deeply forked and the top half of the tail fin is longer than the bottom half. Small individuals have spots on their sides, but the spots tend to disappear in older fish. The edge of the anal fin is rounded. Like other catfish, four pairs of barbels (whisker-like projections) surround the mouth, the body is scaleless, an adipose (fat) fin is present, and there is a spine at the front edge of both the dorsal and pectoral fins. The upper jaw sticks out past the lower jaw. Body color varies widely from silvery gray on top to light below. It may be almost black or blue in color.

Natural History

The channel catfish naturally lives in rivers. It is stocked in ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. It feeds on the bottom, eating insects, fish, crayfish, mollusks, and plants. It is active at night. Females reach maturity at 13 to 16 inches, males somewhat earlier. Spawning occurs May through July. The female

deposits as many as 20,000 eggs in a nest fanned out on the bottom or in an object on the bottom. Eggs hatch in six to 10 days. The male guards the eggs and fry while they are in the nest. Young catfish swim in schools up to several days or weeks. The channel catfish has an average life span of eight years.

Habitats

constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; interior rivers and streams; Mississippi River; Missouri River; natural lakes and prairie marshes

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.